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FOUNTAIN OF THE GREAT LAKES  
By Lorado Taft



# BRUSH AND PENCIL

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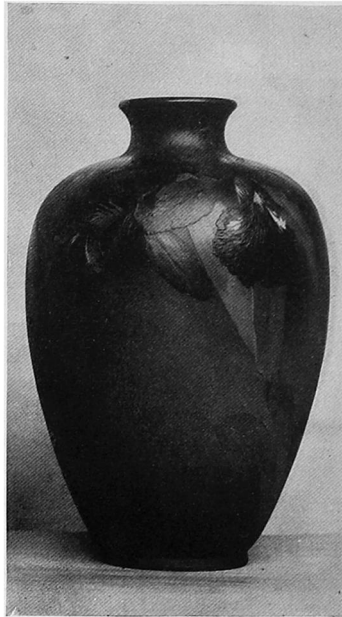
No. 2

## CINCINNATI'S CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN CERAMIC ART

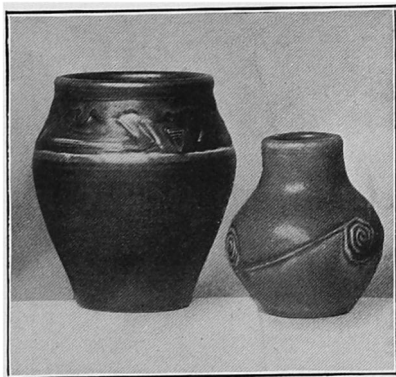
The mute creations of the potter proclaim the early existence of many nations now extinct. Were these vessels of clay but endowed with the gift of speech, what tales they could tell of those who lived and loved, suffered and died, long ages ago.

Pottery is among the first of the useful arts noticeable in the history of every people. By the manner of burning, decoration, and inscription we learn the characteristics of various periods, and are enabled to judge intelligently of the advancement made by the producers. So forcibly do their productions impress us that they who live in history only seem to walk the earth again. Archæologists add the weight of their testimony to this truth. Read the histories of Egypt, Assyria, Phœnicia, Greece, early Britain, Japan, China, and the "Mound Builders" of North America, and you will find that they all contribute annals emphasizing the important part baked clay has played in their national life.

The wonderful—in fact, almost incredible—discoveries of Professor Flinders Petrie in the neighborhood of Thebes, a race dating 3,000 years B. C., form another link in the chain of events which make up the history of nations. Not only were over 2,000 bodies exhumed, but perfect examples of pottery of that period were found. This naturally involves the question of the antiquity of pottery; but this has been so fully discussed in special books on the subject that a further exposition here is unnecessary.



VASE  
By the Rookwood Pottery Company



JARS  
By the Rookwood Pottery Company

Pottery, in its broadest sense, is very comprehensive, including as it does all objects made of clay molded while in a moist, plastic state, and afterward hardened by fire. Its making depends on the chemical changes it undergoes while in the process of burning and vitrification. Much care must be exercised in the selection, blending, and burning of clays in order that most satisfactory results as to hardness, artistic effects, and shapes may be obtained. The two kinds of clays — “lean” (those that have a large percentage of free silica), and “fat” (those that are plastic

and unctuous) — should be studied carefully as to their qualities, for they each have radically different shrinking qualities.

You ask, What is clay? A celebrated geologist, Edward Orton, gives this definition: “As ordinarily used, clay denotes any earthy substance which can be worked up with water into a plastic mass, and then retain the shape into which it has been formed when dried. Clay and sand are two of the most common products of the decomposition of the older rocks that constitute what is commonly known as the crust of the earth. Pure clay is a hydrated silicate of alumina, composed of one portion of the sesquioxide of aluminum united with two portions of silica and one of water ( $Al_2O_3 \cdot 2SiO_2 \cdot 2H_2O$ ). It is a fact, and one to be regretted, that there is no really satisfactory way to find out what a clay can be made to do but to try it.” An essential condition, is that the clay should be well ground, worked, and mixed prior to being molded and fired.

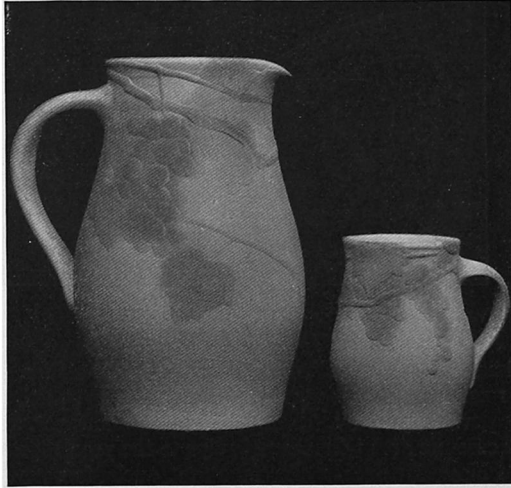


JARS  
By the Rookwood Pottery Company

Utility, rather than beauty, was,

as can readily be imagined, the primary motive governing the production of all clay utensils. Generally, the idea of art seemed to insinuate itself; nations were schooled by example and stimulated by pride, until the wonderfully beautiful ceramic productions of to-day have entirely superseded the crude and inelegant pieces of earlier periods of pottery making.

Were I to name all the various stages, according to epoch and country, through which this art has passed, enough facts could be presented to crowd out the original intention of making this purely a sectional article. I leave the former to others who are pursuing the subject as a special theme, requiring careful investigation and study. The history of the development of the pottery industries of the United States is intensely interesting to the ceramist, and



PITCHERS  
By the Rookwood Pottery Company

the facts are exposed by the light of research. There was no one event which had more to do with the advancement of this art, and especially in the West, than the great and beautiful centennial at Philadelphia, in 1876. Here were brought together, under the most auspicious conditions, the dainty porcelain and china productions of Europe, the grotesque yet beautiful creations of China and Japan, the gorgeous examples from the Orient.

From the potteries of our own nation were placed in competition many noteworthy, and in fact remarkable, illustrations in clay of the potter's inventiveness and energy. To pottery, as to all things, the adage, "Nothing stands still," applies, and when the city of Chicago flung wide her gates in 1893, and invited the nations to the World's Fair, the swarming multitude was astounded at the improvement made by this country in ceramics.

Many of her visitors cherished vivid recollections of Philadelphia, and were thus prepared to make comparisons. The progress was as gratifying as it was marvelous; beautiful as it was instructive. Among the many exquisite and meritorious American exhibits there was one whose wares,



VASES

By the Rookwood Pottery Company

almost above criticism, gave a thrill of positive pleasure to the visitor. I refer to that of Rookwood, Cincinnati, to which pottery more space will be devoted later on. Before doing this, however, a resume of the condition of ceramic art in Cincinnati prior to the year 1880 might prove interesting.

Notwithstanding the fact that such famous artists as Whittredge, Sontag, Frankenstein, and Beard left Cincinnati discouraged from want of patronage, the germ of artistic impulses was not dead. It needed only the presence of a Moses or a Joshua to arouse the people and cause them to push forward to the "promised land" — the Canaan of Art.

Illustrative of the feeling in this city in 1874, it is related of Whittredge — that wonderful delineator of nature in all her various moods — that he added to his income by painting landscapes on hose-reels, etc. His subsequent successes are too well known to need further presentation.

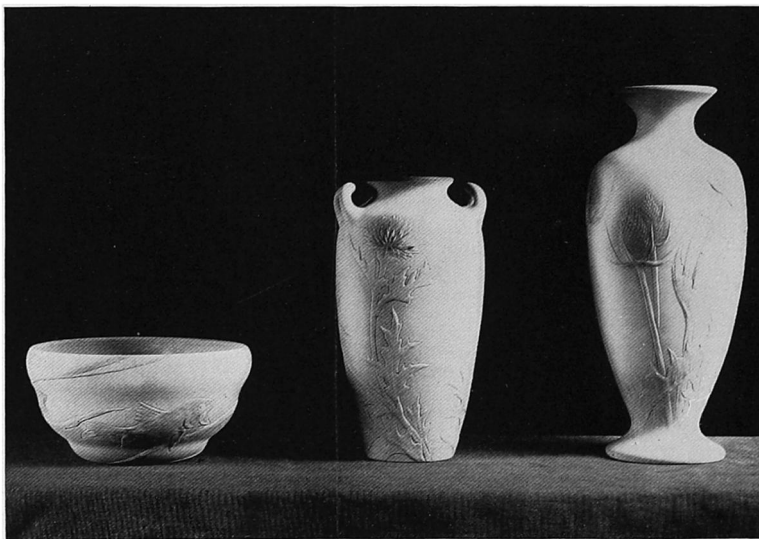
Inseparably connected with the history of all new industries are the names of those pioneers whose zeal and perseverance made fond anticipations eternal realities. Among the experimenters we find the names of the Randals, William Bromley, George Scott, the Tempests, Frederick Dallas, and, although not a potter, Benn Pitman.

It is to this last mentioned gentleman, one of thoroughly artistic temperament, that Cincinnati owes her celebrity in the line of high art pottery. It was he who, by his foresight and enterprise, procured from the East samples of over-glaze pigments with which to experiment. Quick to recognize the value of a woman's delicacy of taste and touch, he called to his assistance a few prominent ladies of the city whose æsthetic views were established. Mr. Pitman generally bore, it is said, the entire expense of these primary trials.

A class was formed in the summer of 1874, and under the guidance of an instructor (Miss Marie Eggers) the decorated china fever broke out in this city in almost epidemic form. Fortunately for the glory of American ceramic art there was no remedy applied to stay its progress. The class consisted of Mesdames William Dodd, A. B. Merriam, William Dominick, E. G. Leonard, Florence Kebler and Misses Keenan, McLaughlin, Newton, and Woollard. So faithfully did these ladies apply themselves that it was not long ere their productions began to attract attention. The display in Cincinnati in May, 1875, of their artistic achievements can well be designated as an event in the history of pottery in the West, and especially of the city itself. It was a remarkable exhibit, prepared by a few society ladies, and attracted universal comment, so much so that it was deemed worthy a prominent place in the Centennial.

Conspicuous among the ladies, Miss M. Louise McLaughlin is justly entitled to "first honorable mention" for her enterprise and unbounded enthusiasm. The year 1874 marked her advent into this new field for women, and now, as the result of her perseverance, she is recognized as an authority on china decoration. Having alluded to the Centennial, it is relevant to say that it was there that she became impressed with the Limoges ware exhibited.

This style and method of decoration owes its discovery to M. Laurin of Bourge-la-Reine, France, in the year 1875. It is agreed that while



VASES  
By the Rookwood Pottery Company

it did not involve any new principle, it did contain such a novel application of old ones as to make the discovery important. It has been well said that it "places in the hands of the painter of pottery a method at once so artistic and so thoroughly in accord with the modern school as to awaken a profound interest in the minds of all lovers of art."

Fired with the determination to find out this method of decoration and process of firing, Miss McLaughlin, in October, 1877, commenced her researches, sending abroad for the colors. So successful was she that her work was honored by a place in the Paris Exposition (1879) and received favorable criticism. Pleased with her advancement in this direction, yet ever desirous of improvement, she has diligently continued experimenting, until recently her efforts have been crowned by an important discovery — inlaid work in the clay.

It was indeed an inspiration which led Miss McLaughlin to investigate this style of ornamentation so closely identified with Mme Helene de Hange-Genlis, widely known in connection with the faience d' Orion. Although she had never seen this rare faience, the thought that inlaid designs could be reproduced without incision took possession of her busy mind. How well she succeeded is shown by the letters patent granted her, which also prove the absolute originality of her conception.

The ware has been named the "Losanti," and the process, briefly described, is as follows: A mold for the desired shape is prepared, upon the interior of which is painted, in any desired color and thickness, the design to be inlaid. The liquid clay is then cast, and in filling every crevice in the mold the decoration is surrounded, thus completing the inlaying. In color the wares are most delicate, causing the inlaid designs to stand out in bold relief from a smooth, glazed surface. What a wonderful advance over the old mold method!

With Miss McLaughlin's success in under and over glaze work as a stimulus, a party of enthusiastic workers formed, in the spring of 1879, what was known as the Pottery Club of Cincinnati. The annual exhibitions always attracted attention, not only from an admiring and non-critical public but connoisseurs as well. Little did these ladies realize how much they were doing to encourage art, or how great an industry they were founding.

As can be imagined, in this experimental, embryonic stage many disappointments occurred, as the club gathered three times a week to work and await the results of the firings. Sometimes when the precious bit of decorated clay was brought forth the colors would be burned out, or mixed together in designs fantastic and indescribable. But patient, observing, progressive effort bore right results, and to-day many a drawing-room is beautified by productions of the dainty hands of these fair potters. Would that the limits of this article permitted a separate word of praise for each member of this club.

Amid the dusty, dingy surroundings of a private pottery these ambitious women toiled, their labors lightened by that buoyancy which comes

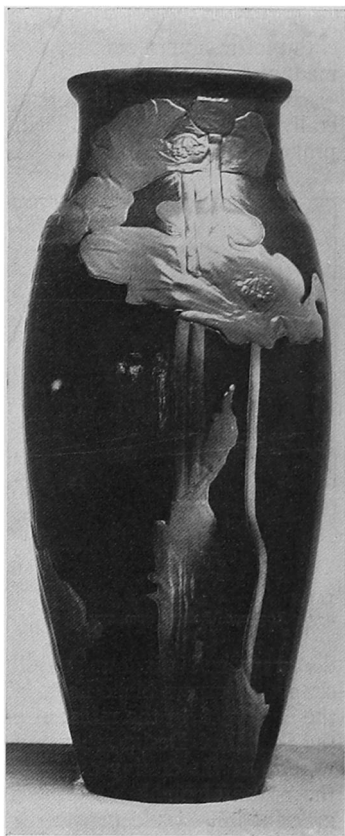


from faith in ultimate success. Friends of the enterprise were not lacking, for through the generosity of Mrs. Bellamy Storer (then Mrs. G. W. Nichols) and Miss McLaughlin, two proper kilns were provided. Experiment followed experiment, and in their quest for knowledge they were free to call upon such capable authorities as Messrs. Frederick Dallas and Joseph Bailey.

Mrs. Storer herself was indefatigable in the acquirement of a thorough knowledge of the art of pottery, and day after day, with apron and modeling tools, she industriously studied and worked. Such a course brought its reward and recognition, and now many odd examples of her skill are given a well-merited place in the Art Museum of Cincinnati.

Active though she was, competitors were not lacking, as is abundantly testified to by choice specimens of her companions' productions in the beautiful home of art mentioned. Mesdames Dodd, Leonard and Plimpton, and Misses Banks, Fletcher, Fry, Holabird, and Newton turned out exceptionally good work. Not one was more patient or zealous in her labors than Miss Clara C. Newton, and the creations of her active mind and deft hands speak volumes of well-deserved praise for her energy. She has been particularly successful in the difficult shade of cobalt, confining her labors to painting on the biscuit.

The special mention of these few names must not detract one jot or one tittle from the well-earned reputation of others, whose work, none the less meritorious, is not perhaps as widely known. A class consisting of about sixty persons was formed in April, 1880, by two young artists — John Rettig and Albert Valentien — who were pupils under Mr. Pitman. This class labored faithfully in the study of what was then known as Cincinnati faience. Their work was thoroughly artistic and successful. Mr. Rettig ranks high as a decorator, while Mr. Valentien is to-day one of the head designers in Rookwood Pottery.



VASE  
By the Rookwood Pottery Company

While to Mrs. Maria Longworth Storer belongs the credit of Rookwood's inception in 1880, she was not slow to recognize merit in others, and its success is largely due to such artists as Miss Clara Chipman Newton, Albert Valentien, Matthew Daly, and Martin Rettig, whose æsthetic productions are well known in the world of ceramics. Mrs. Storer's father was an enthusiastic supporter of the pottery from the first, and his unlimited means made possible the carrying on of her favorite project.

But the efforts of all workers in art pottery were hampered by the generally felt want of better facilities in the way of buildings and kilns to properly develop their art. This lack Mrs. Storer determined to supply,



JARS  
By the Rookwood Pottery Company

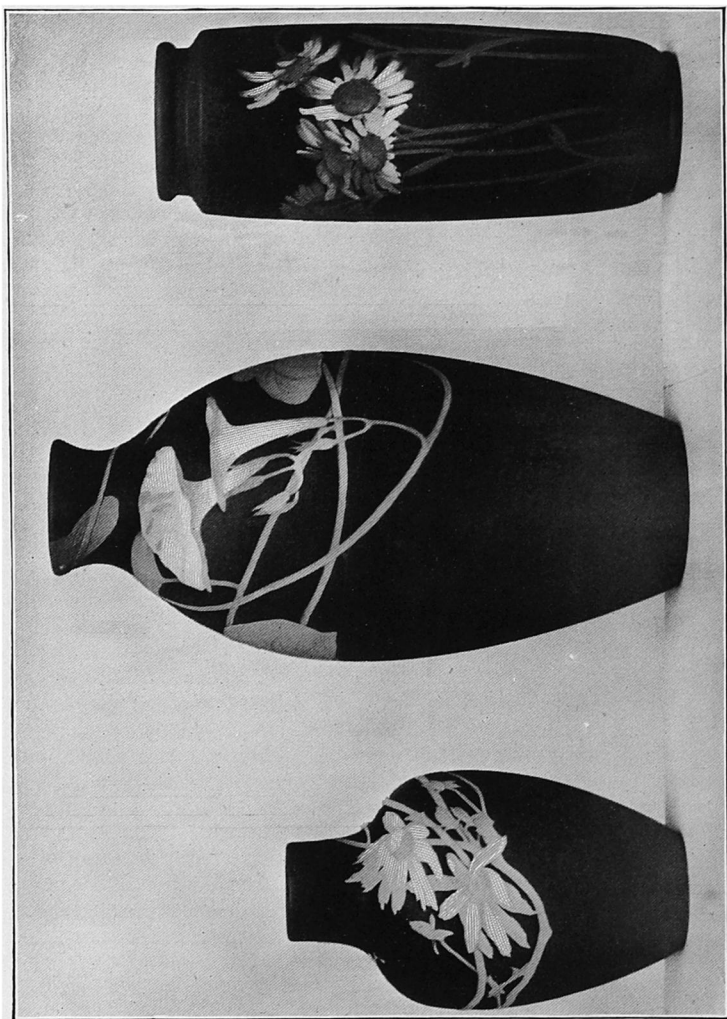
and to-day the new Rookwood Pottery stands a monument to her liberality and enthusiasm.

Picturesquely resting on the brow of Mt. Adams, a hill to the east of Cincinnati, is the building whose manufactured products have become famous the world over. Gray stone and cement walls, quaint

doorways and windows, red-tiled roof and formidable looking cannon-shaped chimneys blend harmoniously into an artistic whole. Slightly to the northeast, in the midst of a beautiful park, are the Art Museum and the School of Design, the grave elder brother and sister watching, as it were, over the destiny of their ambitious little relative. To the south are the beautiful highlands of Kentucky; to the west, on the Ohio side, rise graceful hills, while between them flows, spanned by five noble bridges, the Ohio—La Belle Riviere.

Surrounded by these favorable environments, many artists work, among the first of whom was Mrs. Storer herself. She inherits her artistic temperament from her father (Joseph Longworth) and grandfather (Nicholas Longworth), both being natural patrons of art. It was, in fact, Nicholas Longworth who, with quick discernment of artistic ability, saw in Hiram Powers' chisel the stroke of genius, and by his generosity made possible the creation of that masterpiece of sculpture, "The Greek Slave."

With these few historical data let us turn aside and acquaint ourselves with the products of the kilns, so beautiful in their daintiness and originality.



VASES  
By the Rockwood Pottery Company

It was in November, 1880, that the first kiln was fired in the old building, and the result was reasonably satisfactory. The wares were artistic to a degree, and the ivory finish, as well as the under-glaze decorations in blues and browns, attracted much favorable notice. Incised work was also a feature of Rookwood's early attempts. Printing was resorted to about this time, but was soon abandoned for the more difficult, but more artistic, hand painting.

It may be well to explain what printing means, and I quote a recognized authority: "In the printing process the designs are engraved on copper plates and transferred to the surface of the ware. Mineral colors, which have been mixed carefully with a prepared printing oil, are used to print the design on linen tissue paper, which is then laid upon the ware and rubbed with a piece of soft flannel until it adheres evenly and firmly. In a few hours the paper is plucked from the ware, and the printed design is then touched up with color by hand. In the under-glaze process the print is usually washed off, instead of being removed by plucking, and then the ware is fired, in the enamel kiln, sufficiently to burn the oil out of the color. It is then dipped in the glaze and sent through the ghost kiln."

Rookwood ware is pre-eminently a true faience, and the "cameo," "dull finished," and the highly glazed "Rookwood" are so well known by this time as to render a detailed description superfluous. The manner of tinting, and the delicate mellow blending of the colors beneath transparent colored glazes are *au dessus toute critique*. Particularly is this noticeable in the style known as "tiger's-eye." Another most beautiful color is known as "aërial blue," but, to my mind, the rich tones in reds, browns, greens, etc., which have proved to be so popular, will still retain favor in the eyes of the critical connoisseur. The clays used are principally from the Ohio Valley, but the arts of the chemist are often utilized in the mixing.

From its establishment Rookwood has had the much-to-be-desired and necessary aid of competent and skilled artists. Among those at present engaged in the work there is one who has brought the experience acquired from careful training in Japan — Mr. Kitaro Shirayamadani. The impress of his genius is seen in many of the quaint designs and decorations indigenous to that empire and its national art. Rookwood has distinguished itself along other lines besides its marvelous under-glazes; constantly experimenting and constantly perfecting.

Not satisfied with its success in vases, urns, jardinières, etc., it developed the architectural, until now its beautiful mantels and other architectural features are known from ocean to ocean, comparing with the finest Eastern faience and mats. The latter (mat) is an evolution from the old-style smear glaze, and while differing from it, yet is like it in the dull surface it presents. As a writer aptly puts it, "But as the applied decoration now becomes subordinate, the heavy glaze or enamel with which these pieces are invested is no longer designed merely to protect the colors beneath, nor to reveal them as though swimming in a lustrous depth. The glaze itself is now the chief and highest interest."

Although there is a marked individuality to each piece, above all stands out the beautiful texture of the glaze, as beautiful and delicate as changeable silk, and withal a wonderful feeling of depth. Vellum ware is another variety of dull glaze, not making any pretense to the vigor of the heavier glaze, but to the delicate, permitting a more elaborate decorative effect. To the eye the texture has a softer and closer appearance than other mat glazes. The kilns are fired with crude petroleum, as from all reports this fuel insures more satisfactory results in every particular. It is to this care, which is exercised in every department, from the grinding and mixing of the clay, the artistic blending of the colors, down even to the shipping, that Rookwood owes its fame. Now to the enjoyment found in a well-earned reputation, let us leave it.

It would be like leaving off the capital of a proper name should I neglect to mention the name of Thomas Wheatley. He is a man through whose veins courses the blue blood of artistic life. To him much credit is due for the growth of the ceramic industry in our city, and the "Wheatley" ware is fast finding place in artistic homes not only here, but throughout the æsthetic East. This ware is likewise a mat glaze, and comes in yellows, blues, and greens, upon which appears fernlike tracery most pleasing to the eye. This ware is also being utilized in an architectural way, and the mantels, brackets and panels are steadily making a name and place for themselves.

This article would be incomplete were not at least a mention made of the work done by the Cincinnati Pottery Company, founded in 1880. Productions of this pottery were highly artistic, and extremely popular with a discerning public. The Hungarian faience — a style of over-glaze ornamentation on white ware — was developed in many beautiful designs, and made a most excellent impression. Besides this, there were the "Portland blue" faience, which was immensely popular with every person, and the faience known as the "Kezonta."

China collectors are no doubt familiar with this last truly beautiful ware in its original shapes and artistic decorations. It is of a rich ivory color, forming a basis for brilliant decorative effects in gold and colors. This pottery deserved a longer existence than it enjoyed, but the energy of outside decorators, who had become competitors almost in the same style of work, made the venture an unprofitable one, and the pottery shut down. Its effect on artistic ceramics was like that of the health-giving sunlight upon nature, and its projectors can well be proud of their attempt. Some distinctive examples have found an abiding place in the Art Museum of Cincinnati.

The Morgan and Avon Potteries justly deserve a word of eulogy (they no longer exist) for the dainty and original productions from their respective works, and many a cabinet has been made more attractive by containing among its treasures examples of Morgan and Avon ware.

Thus we see what energy can do when guided by that mental equipoise and perseverance so essential to the development of any new industry. In



**SUMMER MORNING**

By Leonard Ochtman

( See article on National Academy of Design )



the founding of this branch of mercantile operations, this opening of new avenues of employment for those of delicate, artistic natures, and especially for those of their own sex, the women of Cincinnati can well be proud. Who can and will limit the possibilities of woman's work for the future?

LAWRENCE MENDENHALL.



## REPEAL THE DUTY ON ART WORKS

While the prospect of getting any general legislation relating to the tariff at an early day is steadily growing fainter, there is at least one phase of the question which is capable of easy solution and should be taken up without further delay. The absurd clause of the tariff act imposing a duty on works of art should be repealed at once, and before it has done any more harm as a hindrance to educational and cultural influences. The framers of the present tariff saw fit to provide that imported art works designed for public exhibition might enter—under certain restrictions—duty free. Having made this small concession to the nation's educational needs, they proceeded to nullify its effect by imposing a duty of 15 per cent ad valorem on all paintings or sculptures brought in by private owners.

A concerted effort is to be made at the next session of Congress to secure the repeal of this duty. Even the most devout among the high-tariff worshippers can present no reasonable ground for refusing this concession. The tariff "protects" nobody, as American artists are the chief sufferers from its effects, and are unanimous in demanding the repeal of the duty. Their livelihood depends upon the education of the public taste. As privately owned paintings usually pass in a short time into public galleries, the duty that keeps them out of the country simply hinders the educational process. More than a third of the paintings in the great Corcoran gallery at Washington are owned by private individuals, who had to pay a penalty for bringing them past the American custom-houses.

Positively injurious so far as its "protective" feature is concerned, and producing an insignificant revenue, the tariff on art works has no excuse for existing. It is a discredit to a nation which boasts of its devotion to education and its increasing progress toward general culture. C. D. N.

